

The collection of Oriental art at the Vilnius Museum of Antiquities in 1862–1865

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Abstract. The present article provides a discussion about the collection of Oriental art acquired from Kronstadt residents in 1862 and exhibited at the Vilnius Museum of Antiquities. This was the first public collection of its kind in Lithuania. For this reason, the article is devoted to an analysis of the meanings and provisions that the Lithuanian scholarly community sought to impart to the exhibits of this collection as well as how they were perceived by the society at the time. A detailed discussion about the content of the collection, its attribution and donors is provided.

Introduction

‘Oriental studies’ is a term which customarily refers to the science dedicated to research and exploration of the culture, language, history, nature, etc., of the nations of the East. The term also refers to collections of Asian culture and art which have already been or are being compiled and which oftentimes include the heritage of the civilisations of Ancient Egypt or the Ancient East. In the present-day scholarly circulation, the term ‘Oriental studies’ (Lith. *orientalistika*) has been undergoing change due to its Eurocentric connotations. In fact, the collections accumulated in Lithuania in the mid-19th century, which are the subject matter in the present article, were not described by this term as well. The first public collection of Oriental artefacts formed the Department of Ethnography and contained a collection of cultural heritage of Asian cultures acquired and exhibited by the Vilnius Museum of Antiquities, as well as Egyptian artefacts accumulated at the Museum. Since the Ethnography Department of the Vilnius Museum of Antiquities accumulated both artefacts of geographically remote extant cultures and the heritage of a *different*, extinct, culture—Egyptology—the term *Oriental collection*, which has been employed since the latter half of the 19th century, is also used throughout the present article, since it essentially reflects the twofold nature of the collection accumulated in Vilnius in the mid-19th century.

As a scientific discipline, Oriental studies in Lithuania has been the object of interest, albeit intermittently, since the early 19th century, when the cultures and languages of the nations of the East came into focus and became an object of research at Vilnius University. Historically, however, unlike the relevant collections

in neighbouring Poland and Russia, there was no rich Oriental collection formed in Lithuania. Therefore, it is natural that any publications providing a discussion or analysis of the latter type of collections are scarce. The only domain of Oriental collections in Lithuania that has garnered researchers' attention is the heritage of ancient Egypt. In this light, it is worth paying attention to the purposeful and broad research publications by Aldona Snitkuvienė, recently made available to the public in her exhaustive monograph *Lithuania and Ancient Egypt* (Snitkuvienė 2011). Regrettably, there are no publications that provide a thorough discussion of any Asian cultural heritage accumulated in Lithuania. We could only mention one article written by Margarita Matulytė (2004) in this respect. The author provides an assessment of the Oriental collection accumulated by Count Eustachy Tyszkiewicz at the Vilnius Museum of Antiquities in the mid-19th century and states that 'in local museography, the exotic exhibits were absolutely marginal. ... Devaluing scientific rigour pursued since its foundation, they developed a model of an appealing and educational museum. This was a natural adaptation process. The collections became not only available to the public, but were also adapted to its demands, that is, to mass culture' (ibid., 190–92). Art historian Jolita Mulevičiūtė shares this opinion. In her discussion of the travelling phenomenon of the latter half of the 19th century, she states that Lithuanian society was changing its perception of the Eastern cultural heritage. The mere observation of a conglomeration of non-scholarly oddities and exotic rarities that used to prevail before was replaced by the look of an art expert who assessed the creations of Asian nations 'as objects of art that filled one with fascination with their aesthetics and technical mastership' (Mulevičiūtė 2003, 43). Just like any other society at any given period of time, Lithuanian society of the 19th century was not homogeneous in terms of education, social status, perceptions, feelings, or sense of aesthetics; hence, the perceptions of the East and eastern culture differed, too. Therefore, it is not entirely grounded to maintain that until the second half of the 19th century, Oriental collections in Lithuania were exclusively perceived as *exotics* and *oddities*, since, alongside this view on *Oriental artefacts*, there was a different domain, that of scholarly research.

Considering all of the above and relying on the analytical descriptive and historical comparative methods, we will explore the Oriental collection at the Vilnius Museum of Antiquities in the period 1855–1865. We will focus on the overview and presentation of the Asian cultural heritage which formed part of the Museum, since the other part of the Museum's collection—the Egyptian collection—has been thoroughly discussed in the aforementioned monograph by Snitkuvienė (2011). In our analysis, we will attempt to reveal what meanings and value provisions the Lithuanian scholarly community sought to associate with this collection and its

exhibits; why Oriental studies were manifest in Lithuanian society of the time. We will aim at defining the perspectives of the society on the Oriental collection: whether its exhibits were perceived as rare and strange objects, admired for their aesthetics and execution, or as an illustration of the way of life of remote nations.

Oriental collections in the 19th- century Lithuania: between exotics and ethnography

Eastern nations, their cultures, customs, history and nature were not *terra incognita* to the educated part of Lithuanian society of the 19th century. Literature and books in general were the primary and oftentimes the only source of information. In his *Crimean Sonnets* published in 1826, Adam Mickiewicz, the most-read poet of the time, wrote:

From out the mosques the pious wend their way;
Muezzin voices tremble through the night;
Within the sky the pallid King of Light
Wraps silvered ermine round him while he may,
And Heaven's harem greets its star array.
One lone white cloud rests in the azure height—
A veiled court lady in some sorrow's plight—
Whom cruel love and day have cast away.¹

Losing themselves in Mickiewicz's words that described the beauty of the East so poetically and romantically and conveyed the mysterious Oriental spirit, the readers also experienced emotional fascination with the East, its nature and culture, which contributed to raising the overall interest in the remote and exotic lands of the Orient. However, Lithuanian society of the time did not perceive the Orient exclusively at the sensual level. The first half of the 19th century abounded in literature of a different sort: travel accounts of remote lands and descriptions of new discoveries. According to art historian Mulevičiūtė, starting from the early 19th century, and from the 1830s–40s in particular, Lithuania was merely inundated by travel literature: 'descriptions of famous expeditions, studies in geography and ethnography, guidebooks and specialized periodical publications' (Mulevičiūtė 2003, 42).

Vilnius University scholars were also keenly interested in Oriental studies; there were even discussions about setting up the Department of Oriental Studies (for more information, see Mejor 2009, 15–28), while the University library housed manuscripts in Arabic, Turkish, Tatar and other languages alongside research works dealing with the Orient. An occasional Oriental rarity would also find its place in the same walls:

¹ As translated by Edna Worthley Underwood, available at <<http://www.sonnets.org/mickiewicz.htm#005>> (accessed on 17 January 2012) (translator's note).

‘a feather carved from a Baghdad reed, a shell with Arabic inscriptions, a Chinese box’ (Pacevičius 2010, 205–8). Unfortunately, due to the participation of students and professors in an upheaval in 1831, the tsar’s administration initiated the closure of Vilnius University in 1832, which put an end to its early activities.

The fashion for the Orient that spread in 19th-century Europe—the stylisation of the household and home interiors with Chinese, Japanese, Turkish and Egyptian objects, thereby supplying the home environment with an ‘Oriental spirit’, was not uncommon to Lithuanian estates. Well-off representatives of Lithuanian society were familiar with Oriental household artefacts—these were usually used for their intended purpose and highlighted the estate’s interior. For example, Countess Yadvyga Potulicka-Hutten-Czapska’s estate in Samogitia housed ‘unique vases, pots, plates and bowls that most likely originated in the studio of one craftsman of the Qing Epoch’ (Poškus 2005, 95). At the very end of the 19th century, public exhibitions comprised of private collections of Oriental artefacts were held in Vilnius (Mulevičiūtė 2003, 43). Meanwhile, starting from the middle to late 19th century, in order to acquire Oriental dishes, fabrics or other household artefacts or accessories, one did not have to travel to remote China, Japan or India. Oriental objects could be purchased in St Petersburg, Warsaw and more generally in any city of Western Europe. Occasionally, they could also be bought in Vilnius.

But for a long time there were no museum-owned public Oriental collections in Lithuania that would be available for viewing. It was only in March 1862 that an announcement appeared in Vilnius inviting residents of the city to see the exhibition organised by the Museum of Antiquities and composed of over two hundred exhibits from Japan, China, Egypt and other countries that had been donated by Kronstadt seamen. The opening of the exhibition was of interest from the museum perspective as well, since this was the first temporary thematic museum exhibition in Lithuania. It could also be maintained that this was the first ‘commercial’ exhibition. The announcement said that (with the permission of Vilnius military governor) this exhibition operated ‘daily in the premises of the Museum from March 25 to the Palm Week from 12 to 4 pm. Admission fee per person was 15 kopeiks and as little as 10 kopeiks for students of educational institutions and pupils of women’s boarding schools. Visitors of all beliefs and strata were admitted’ (LMAVB RS BA–1450, 1). There is no information as to whether the exhibition ‘enjoyed a commercial success’, but it is believed that the admission fee was established in order to partially cover the costs of delivering the exhibits to Vilnius, since the Museum of Antiquities was financially supported by its members and not by the state. Usually the admission to the Vilnius Museum of Antiquities was free once per week—on Sundays from 12 to 4 pm.

On April 14 of the same year, during the meeting of the Provisional Archaeological Committee of the Vilnius Museum of Antiquities, Count Eustachy Tyszkiewicz, who chaired the Committee and the Museum of Antiquities itself, informed members of the committee that a new Department of Ethnography was being established at the Vilnius Museum (VUB RS F 13–234, 91). The department was to be based on the aforementioned Chinese and Japanese antiquities Count Tyszkiewicz had brought from Kronstadt: namely artefacts donated by the military and navy doctors of the Baltic Fleet, and part of the exhibits from Count Michał Tyszkiewicz's Egyptian collection donated by the latter to the museum (*ibid.*).

Made at the end of the same year, the yearly report on the activities of the museum, alongside the already existing nine departments, succinctly defined the new department of the museum: 'this year, the collection formed by donations of member of the Committee, benefactor Count Michał Tyszkiewicz and doctors of the Baltic Fleet comprises 406 objects, of which the greater part are Chinese, Japanese, Egyptian and Siberian' (*ibid.*, 109). The content of this department remained unchanged, i.e. it was not supplemented with any new acquisitions till the very closure of the museum. At the last meeting of the Archaeological Committee in 1865, it was pointed out that the content of the Department of Ethnography was the same, while the number of its exhibits grew by two units up to 408 exhibits (*ibid.*, 147).

At present, unless there is a certain additional context mentioned, the words 'ethnography' or 'ethnographic heritage' suggest associations and are usually identified with Lithuanian ethnography, Lithuanian ethnographic heritage, and similar definitions that express ethnic identity. The question arises as to whether 'ethnography' was perceived in the same way in 19th-century Lithuania, since this concise description of the Department of Ethnography of the Vilnius Museum of Antiquities reveals that this collection had nothing in common with Lithuanian ethnography. On the other hand, it needs to be clarified whether the Oriental collection accumulated in the Department of Ethnography of the Museum differed from Oriental dishware and other artefacts and accessories found in the interiors or used in the households of Lithuanian estates.

Let us now discuss the perceptions of the 'ethnographic heritage' of the time in light of the meaning and content that the Vilnius Museum of Antiquities, as a collective scientific institution, attributed to it and sought to convey to the society. The museum was the first institution in 19th-century Lithuania which, by establishing the ethnographic department within its walls, made an ethnographic heritage manifest; thereby, promoting both the interest of the society and scholarly research in this field.

The emergence of ethnographic collections in Europe is associated with the abundance of travels stipulated by geographical discoveries, when collections started

to be made of *rarities* and *oddities* that testified to the existence of distant lands and diverse cultures. At the same time, these collections were closely related to the accumulation of objects pertaining to natural science—rare, unusual and previously unseen specimens of plants, animals, rocks, etc. It may even be maintained that collections pertaining to natural science were prevalent in the early stages of the collecting in general. In the late 18th and first half of the 19th centuries, the broad application of the comparative method—a new paradigm for interpreting natural and social phenomena—gave rise to numerous classification systems. Naturally, the very perspective on the ‘exotic’ phenomena underwent change as well.

Natural science in general and its collections in particular were largely influenced by the classification system of plants and animals developed by Carl von Linné. Meanwhile, cultural heritage was affected by Johann Joachim Winckelmann’s classification system of antique sculptures as well as by Christian Jürgensen Thomsen’s three-age system: the stone, the bronze and the iron ages. This period also witnessed the formation of scientific classifications of objects pertaining to natural science. Until the latter half of the 19th century, ethnographic collections accumulated in Europe (unlike the science of ethnography) were perceived as collections that represented not so much European cultures, but rather the material heritage of other parts of the world (Africa, Asia, Oceania, and the Americas). As compared to collections prevalent in the 17th–18th centuries, the selection criteria of objects themselves were undergoing change, which consequently affected the content of newly-formed collections: the accumulation of formerly prevailing weird, rare and unseen objects was replaced by the collection of attributes of daily life, household and interior items, clothing, tools, weapons, and the like. The mid-19th century witnessed the rise and popularisation of specialized expeditions to other continents. Their objective was to explore remote nations and regions from the geographical, ethnographic, and statistical perspectives. There is no doubt that European empires and colonial states, which organised these expeditions, also pursued mercantile interests: finding new trading routes and natural resources.

The British Museum is one example of this change to a gain-oriented outlook on ethnographic collections. After its establishment in 1753, ethnographic collections were accumulated and housed in the natural history and oddities department. In 1836, ethnographic collections were transferred to the newly set-up antiquities department, and starting from 1845, they were exhibited in seventy-four cases of the ethnology gallery: nine cases exhibited Chinese and Indian artefacts, four cases—African artefacts (excluding Egyptian ones), twenty-nine cases—the material heritage of North and South Americas, and the remaining cases—material from Oceania, South-Eastern Asia and Polynesia. It was only in 1866 that after the department of British and medieval antiquities had been established, that English

and more generally European ethnographic collections started to be accumulated (the British Museum 2011).

There is no doubt that the founders of the Vilnius Museum of Antiquities were aware of the latest scientific tendencies in Europe. Even prior to the establishment of the museum, during his visit to the Museum of the Royal Society of Northern Antiquaries (*La Société Royale des Antiquaires du Nord*), one of the most famous societies in Europe of the time, which was then located in Christiansborg Palace in Copenhagen, Eustachy Tyszkiewicz acknowledged the advantages of the comparative method and wrote: 'the first thought that came to my mind while looking at the unearthed stone weapons was whether their production in the north was intended for hunting other nations, or whether this was determined by the needs and necessity of local dwellers. Searching for answers, scholars collected the respective specimens of weapons from Greenland, Ireland, Mexico, Terra del Fuego, Brazil, Pennsylvania, etc. Their comparison with each other reveals striking similarities' (Tyszkiewicz 1847, 6–7). It is notable that, in his study of the archaeological heritage of the region, Tyszkiewicz was one of the first researchers in Lithuania to apply the archaeological classification system of ages proposed by Thomsen.

Close collaboration between the Vilnius Museum of Antiquities and research institutions of the Russian Empire (The Imperial Library of St Petersburg, the Imperial Geographical Society, the Central Archives, the Archaeological Committee, the Academy of Sciences, the Riga Museum, the Odessa Society of History and Antiquaries, St Petersburg, Moscow, Dorpat, Kazan, and Kiev Universities) and with European centres of science (the Czech National Museum, Prague University, Dresden, Leipzig, Mainz, Graz, Poznan, Krakow, and Warsaw Learned Societies) (Aleksandravičius 1989, 44–45, 106–112) as well as the mutual exchange of publications testify to the level of sophistication of the Lithuanian academic community.

It was not only the aspirations to measure up to European scholarly institutions and museums of the time that may have encouraged Tyszkiewicz and other members of the Vilnius Provisional Archaeological Committee to further accumulate the ethnographic collection of artefacts from distant countries, but also the activities of the Imperial Geographical Society of St Petersburg had an impact. Starting from the mid-19th century, the society coordinated efforts of Russian scholars in their research in geography, natural resources, and nations of the peripheries of the empire. In 1847, the society engaged in organising expeditions to Siberia and Central Asia, in publishing research findings in the bulletins of the society, various journals, and reports on journeys and expeditions.

Although the Vilnius Museum of Antiquities collaborated with the Imperial Geographical Society of St Petersburg, it was not directly involved in either the

activities or the expeditions organised by the society. Nevertheless, the occasional collections compiled by members of the society in Siberia were donated, among others, to the Vilnius Museum of Antiquities. In 1862, Nikolai Bakshevitch, a collaborating member of the Siberian Department of the Geographic Society, who was then visiting Vilnius, donated types of minerals found in the Yenisei gold-mining district and delivered a report to the members of the Vilnius Provisional Archaeological Committee on the minerals of the region and the geologic features in the gold-mining areas (VUB RS F 13–234, 88). Ivan Bulytchev, a full member of the Geographical Society, donated 63 drawings made during his travels through Eastern Siberia (*ibid.*, 146). There were also exhibits collected on the peripheries of the Russian Empire and given to the Vilnius Museum; however, these were exclusively objects pertaining to natural science. Among the most active donors of the objects of this kind was A. Zimodra, a physician in the Caspian Navy. In 1860, ‘from a visit to his homeland, [he] brought and donated to the museum a significant number of shells, minerals, insects as well as an alive scorpion collected on the coasts of the Caspian Sea’ (*ibid.*, 67), and later on many occasions donated *naturalities* from the same Caspian Sea region.

Perhaps because they were pertaining to natural science, these collections did not become part of the Department of Ethnography. Even though, until the establishment of the department in 1862, the collections were rather sporadic and were collected accidentally rather than purposefully, the organisers of the museum perceived them as potential research material for further comparative studies and assessments, as well as for the exploration of other distant cultures and improving their knowledge of nature. A number of reports devoted to the description or analysis of these kinds of collections were delivered at the meetings of the Archaeological Committee.

The perception by Tyszkiewicz and other members of the committee on the accumulation of the Oriental collection as an object of research and science rather than solely exotic objects of interest is evidenced by the fact that, as early as March 1858, Józef Kowalewski, the then Rector of Kazan University, was elected full member of the committee (Kuryer Wileński 1858, no 22). An alumnus of Vilnius University, he expressed his good feelings to the city throughout his entire life, while his scholarly activities in the field of Oriental studies were well-known to the members of the Archaeological Committee. Moreover, alongside regularly sending publications of Kazan University and other works of interest, Kowalewski donated ‘41 Asian coins from a number of rarities found in Pekin’ to the Vilnius Museum (Kuryer Wileński 1858, no 48). In the autumn of 1862, the same year when the Vilnius Museum hosted the Oriental exhibition, he was staying in Vilnius. Kowalewski visited the Vilnius Museum of Antiquities and took part in the meeting

of the Provisional Archaeological Committee on October 11 (VUB RS F 13–234, 102). Moreover, during his stay in Vilnius, Kowalewski cherished other scholarly plans, too. Assisted by the Józef Zawadzki Publishing House, he intended to publish his memoirs on his travels in the East (Tulisow 2009, 101). Therefore, it may be suggested that the intentions of this famous orientalist of his time to be published in Vilnius could have been inspired by the consideration the Vilnius Museum of Antiquities gave to Asian cultures.

Oddities, rarities and exotic objects made up part of the Vilnius Museum of Antiquities. The human nature to observe, to marvel at and in some cases even to feel disgust at the unusual phenomena or objects, to bewilder or shock others, to step beyond the boundaries set by the society between what is ‘normal’, ‘permissible’ and what is not, encouraged donations to the museum as an institution in which these objects could be publicly demonstrated. One of these oddities kept at the museum was a ‘portrait of famous Mordvinian Agafia who had an exceptionally long beard’ donated by Brunon Korzun from Tula in 1858 (Pamiętniki 1858, 18). The portrait garnered reaction of the society, which was reflected in the periodicals. In 1860, a certain Simonovitch donated ‘two stuffed calves with their chests grown together terribly’ to the museum (VUB RS F 13–234, 60). That same year, the manager of Vilnius physicians donated an ‘immature fetus found inside the sheep slaughtered in the Vilnius meat market’ (ibid., 67). There were other donations of odd, rare or exotic exhibits, too; however, they were sporadic, while their exhibition in the museum served as a reminder, a reference to the other, the world of anomalous phenomena which, though rarely encountered, existed in the reality. Consequently, *oddities* and *rarities* did not make the constitutive part of the main narratives in the Vilnius Museum of the time.

The Oriental collection of the Vilnius Museum of Antiquities: attribution and origins

The Department of Ethnography established in the Vilnius Museum of Antiquities in 1862, essentially accumulated two different collections: Oriental and Egyptian. The Oriental collection was comprised of artefacts from China, Japan, the Far East, and South-Eastern Asia and represented the ethnography of the time of distant regions. Meanwhile the Egyptian collection represented the heritage of a culture that had long become extinct. Interestingly, this distinction was perceived (though largely not reflected upon) by the individuals responsible for the growth of the Vilnius Museum. To refer to Egyptian objects, the term *antiquity* was employed (Pol. *starożytności*, Rus. *drevnosti*), while artefacts of Oriental collections were most usually referred to as

objects or creations (Pol. *przedmioty*, Rus. *predmety, proizvedeniya*). This distinction reflected principles of scientific collecting that gained prevalence in the mid-19th century, although sometimes, following the old, 18th-century collecting tradition, Oriental objects were still referred to as *rarities* (Pol. *osobliwości*, Rus. *redkosti*).

At the basis of the Oriental collection brought by Tyszkiewicz from Kronstadt were Japanese and Chinese objects: miscellaneous saucers, dishware, cups, cutlery, fans, specimens of silk fabrics and clothing accessories, bracelets, combs, a bast from rice straw, an umbrella, various boxes, purses, shoes, carpenter's tools, tobacco boxes, pipes, musical instruments, chess, a Japanese ABC book, sculptures of gods, various drawings and coins. Of a similar kind (but different in terms of their materials, form and kind of manufacturing process) were artefacts from South-Eastern Asia (Korea, the Philippines, Ceylon, Sumatra, Java and Haiti). A smaller yet distinct part of the collection was constituted by bows and arrows as well as other hunting ammunition from Manchuria and Bashkiria (Spis 1862). This collection also comprised several artefacts of non-Asian origin, which we will not be dealing with since they go beyond the scope of the present article. These are several objects dating back to Ancient Egyptian times, souvenirs from the Holy Land, Napoleon-related memorabilia from the island of Saint Helena and a few other things (*ibid.*).

The exceptional nature of this collection (as compared to regional or other antiquities) was noticed not only in Vilnius, but also in Warsaw. A local newspaper wrote that 'Count Tyszkiewicz brought to the museum a rich collection of Chinese, Japanese and other rarities, ... miscellaneous specimens, a motley collection. ... Strikingly distinct from local antiquities, it will form an entirely new group in the museum' (Gazeta Warszawska 1862).

Every object donated to the museum by the Kronstadt residents and included in the Oriental collection was dear to the donors themselves. It was a meaningful and valuable recollection of the impressions and feelings every one of them experienced during his or her travels to remote lands. In their entirety and displayed in the museum, all these artefacts could at least partially represent the lifestyle, customs and worldview of the residents of remote countries; in other words, they performed the traditional educational function of the ethnographic material. Taken in isolation, void of any values attributed to them on an individual basis, these artefacts were merely household and interior objects, differing from the utensils we know solely by their form or manufacture process. Each one of these items was not really *odd, uncommon* or *exotic*, their otherness was not exceptional in any particular respect, but those subtle differences made them stand out as representing the material heritage of another nation and culture. Therefore, this collection of the Department of Ethnography can indeed be defined as comprising ethnographic exhibits.

Another noteworthy aspect of this collection is the immortalisation of the donors to the Antiquities Museum by publishing an inventory of donations. In principle, the list of donations published as a separate booklet was a rather uncommon publication, an exceptional phenomenon characteristic of 19th-century Lithuania. It may be maintained that this nine-page booklet entitled *A List of objects donated to the Vilnius Museum by some residents of Kronstadt Seaport town* (Spis przedmiotów ofiarowanych dla muzeum Wileńskiego przez niektórych mieszkańców miasta portowego Kronsztatu) (Spis 1862) was issued specifically as a catalogue of the aforementioned temporary thematic exhibition. Functioning as an announcement or invitation of the Vilnius Museum of Antiquities, it revealed that the Oriental exhibition was to be opened on March 25 in the premises of the museum, while the present issue had been granted censor's permission for publication one day earlier, i.e. March 24 of the same year. Therefore, by attending the exhibition, the town-dweller could also acquire the brochure, which presented the donors and the showcased objects in a concise form. This may partly account for the 'commercial' nature of this exhibition mentioned earlier in this article.

However, the question arises: Why was it this particular Oriental collection that garnered so much attention? Indeed, local collections of the region's heritage were much more meaningful and relevant to the founders of the museum and the society in general. Could it be merely the aspiration to fascinate the Vilnius public with previously unseen Oriental objects and consequently make them visit the museum, or was it an intention 'to adapt to the needs of the mass culture of the society' (Matulytė 2004, 192)? In no way could the museum personnel complain about a lack of attention. On the contrary, since its opening in 1856, the number of visitors grew by the year. It was in 1862 that the museum witnessed the greatest number of visitors (over 10,000) (Aleksandravičius 1989, 44–5), most likely, thanks to the exhibition of the Oriental collection.

On the other hand, could this exhibition have been prompted by the conformist goal to please the empire's officials in the hope that the status of the Vilnius Provisional Archaeological Committee might change and approval might be granted to setting up a permanent scholarly society in Vilnius? In pursuit of the latter, Tyszkiewicz had devoted much time and energy since the inception of the Archaeological Committee in 1855. Part of this Oriental collection was accumulated in the period 1857–60 during the his travels around the world involving 'Askold', one of the earliest screw frigates in the Russian Fleet and the pride of the Imperial Russian Navy's Baltic Fleet. However, the brochure devoted to the aforementioned exhibition did not highlight the name of this Russian warship. The only mention is made next to one of the donor's names which stated that a number of objects were acquired during the cruise around

the world of the frigate 'Askold'. It remains unclear whether other donors had taken part in the journey on this cruiser. Only in the subsequent version of the catalogue of the museum dating to 1885, russified and fully controlled by local officialdom, are logical emphases changed, stating that 'nearly all artefacts of the Chinese and Japanese Section were brought and donated by individuals who had taken part in cruise of the frigate 'Askold' around the world in 1856–57, under the command of Captain Putianin' (Katalog 1885, 36).

Let us now have a closer look at the list of the donors. The catalogue of the 1862 exhibition mentions the following people: physician Walery Witkowski (it was he who had the frigate 'Askold' mentioned next to his name), physician Jan Hryniewicz, physician Adam Sieniewicz, physician Antoni Sajkiewicz, US resident Strong, physician Aleksander Podgórski, Kronstadt priest Wincenty Przyałgowski, Artillery Lieutenant Kruser, Radziejewicz, Lieutenant Zbyszewski, physician Franciszek Królewiecki, Lieutenant Frydowski, Hall's advisor Klaudjusz Reszka, Honorary Advisor Jakowicki, August Tawastszern, Placyd Przyłęski, Jan Jackiewicz, Aleksander Mienicki, Eugenjusz Gojsler, Michał Rutkowski, physician Aloyz Cywiński, physician Józef Krukowski, Ferdynand Mączyński and the priest Wołczacki (Spis 1862).

Interestingly, this list mentions the priest Wincenty Przyałgowski who donated a package of manuscripts to the Antiquities Museum (*ibid.*, 6), but no mention of his name is made in the later, 1885 museum catalogue. Most likely, the donation did not pertain to the Oriental domain. After he had graduated from the Vilnius Ecclesiastical Academy, Przyałgowski was a priest in Vilnius, and starting from 1858, in Kronstadt. In 1860, he published an exhaustive monograph *The Lives of Vilnius Bishops* (*Żywoty biskupów wilenskich*) in St Petersburg. It is possible that the package Przyałgowski had donated to the museum comprised of his own manuscripts and might even have contained a manuscript of his translation of part of Motiejus Valančius' *Samogitian Bishopric* (*Žemaičių vyskupystė*), which, included the latter the list of Oriental objects donated by other Kronstadt residents, evaded censorship and was introduced to the public by Tyszkiewicz.

In general, the 1862 list of Kronstadt's donors is not merely a tribute to the subscribers or a certain token of respect. According to the aforementioned Warsaw newspaper, Oriental artefacts were donated to the Vilnius Museum of Antiquities by 'Poles who served in the Russian fleet, ... countrymen who served for the education they had received for the state's facilities' (*Gazeta Warszawska* 1862). In fact, the subscribers are referred to as *our compatriots* in the Vilnius press, too. Therefore, except for the US citizen, all other subscribers, or at least their larger part, were members of the Lithuanian–Polish community in St Petersburg, and many of them

must have had their roots in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, or were related to Lithuania in some other way.

Klaudjusz Reszka, Aloyz Cywiński and Jan Hryniewicz were alumni of the Vilnius Gymnasium. However, in order to identify the personalities of the Kronstadt subscribers, further in-depth biographical research is necessary. The assumption that the Polish-speaking part of Kronstadt community had originated from historical Lithuania is supported by the fact that, while in Kronstadt, Tyszkiewicz received a hearty and solemn welcome, and the priest Wołczacki dedicated his poem written on the occasion, in which he greeted Tyszkiewicz as a 'Lithuanian and compatriot', on behalf of 'a circle of Kronstadt fellows' (LMAVB RS BA-1460, 155).

Therefore it is apparent that, by making a public presentation of the donors of the Oriental collection, Tyszkiewicz, alongside other actors of the museum, hinted and put an emphasis on patriotism, which was to be read between the lines. The 'list' became a certain symbolic monument to his countrymen who glorified Lithuania's name beyond its borders and promoted patriotic pride in them. Although their donations were the only contribution these people made to the development of the ethnographic science, their names were made public in order to serve as a reminder that residents of this region left their trace on world discoveries and research. The fact that these voluntary subscribers of exotic objects were in no way related to the museum's activities testifies to the active involvement of the region's society, not only of its culturally engaged part, but also in the formation of the museum and social participation. Therefore, this was also an encouragement to other visitors to the museum to take an active part in the activities of the museum, thereby accumulating its collections.

Conclusion

To sum up, it may be stated that, since the mid-19th century, Oriental collections were effected and included within the field of view of collectors and, more generally, the Vilnius Museum of Antiquities. These collections were not perceived, interpreted and presented to the public as *exotic*, *rare* or *odd*, the way they were seen by 18th-century collectors. In 1862, Count Eustachy Tyszkiewicz acquired Asian artefacts from his countrymen residing in Kronstadt, which was the first public Oriental collection in Lithuania representing, though to a very limited extent, the ethnography of these nations. Therefore, it is not accidental that during the same year, the Vilnius Museum of Antiquities witnessed the establishment of the Department of Ethnography on the basis of this collection as well as the Egyptian collection donated by Count Michał Tyszkiewicz. The demonstration of the Oriental collection in the halls of the museum, alongside the publication of the list of subscribers, is the first temporary thematic exhibition in the history of Lithuanian museography.

As far as Kronstadt subscribers were concerned, their contribution received public recognition through the publication of a list of donors. On the one hand, as a token of respect, the publication enhanced the prestige of the museum in the eyes of the society, and on the other, it served as an encouragement to involve actively in building the museum's collections with new acquisitions.

*Translated from Lithuanian
by Julija Korostenskaja*

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